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ABSTRACT

Can teachers see where the reading process is going wrong in the first years of school? Marie M. Clay designed procedures called Reading Recovery to help young children at risk of failure in reading. In the first year of an Ohio pilot study over two-thirds of the children reached average levels in reading and were successfully released from the program. Children from the first 2 years of the study have been followed, and the evidence indicates that they have continued to make good progress in reading, maintaining their gains 2 years after participation in the program. Last year, the third year of the program, over 80% of Reading Recovery children were successfully released. The goal of the program is to help children develop an independent, self-generating system for reading, the kind that good readers have, so that they can keep on learning to read better as they gain experience. The program is based on the principle that children learn to read by reading and the focus of reading is always on meaning. The child participates daily in a one-to-one intensive lesson guided by a teacher who is specially trained to help children develop strategies while they are engaged in meaningful reading and writing tasks. Learning from the success of Reading Recovery, it is possible to draw some general principles for working with young children: invest in the professional development of teachers; provide oral language support for literacy learning; provide high quality reading materials; create massive opportunities for children to read and write; and increase the teachers' observational power. (Seventeen references are attached.) (RAE)

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HOLISTIC WAYS TO HELP CHILDREN AT RISK OF FAILURE

by Gay Su Pinnell

Can we see the reading process going wrong in the first years of school? That was the question Marie M. Clay asked when she began her research on young readers. The time must have been right. Almost simultaneously, and in different parts of the world, Clay (1979; 1982) and Kenneth Goodman (1975; 1986) began to look seriously at children's reading behavior and to analyze errors for clues to "in the head" processing. Clay was particularly interested in self-correction and other indications of children's independent reading. She then asked, "Can we intervene in the early stages of reading instruction to help children in jeopardy find the right path to literacy?"

The answer to both of those questions was "yes." Clay (1979) went on to design procedures, later called "Reading Recovery," to help young children at risk of failure in reading. We have piloted Reading Recovery in Ohio for the last four years. We have learned much about children, about our own teaching, and about changing systems to create new opportunities for children who are at risk of failure.

The Ohio Reading Recovery Project

The Ohio Reading Recovery Project is a collaborative effort of the Ohio Department of Education, The Ohio State University, and school districts in Ohio that elect to participate. The Columbus Public School District was the first to pilot this intensive program for the lowest readers in first-grade classes. Its success led the Ohio legislature to fund a statewide pilot program in 1985-1986. (For further information, contact The Ohio State University College of Education.)

Reading Recovery has had remarkable success in New Zealand, where, after an average of 12 to 14 weeks of individual daily intervention, young children learn to read. They continue to read at

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grade level with regular classroom instruction and need no further remediation. Three years later, those children retain their gains and continue to progress with their peers (Clay 1979; 1982).

The results of Reading Recovery in Ohio have also been promising. In the pilot study and in year 1, over two-thirds of the children reached average levels in reading and were successfully released from the program. Children from those two years have been followed and the evidence indicates that they have continued to make good progress in reading, maintaining their gains two years after participation in the program. With no further intervention, those successfully released ("discontinued") from the program have maintained average progress. The program is now in its third year of statewide implementation. Last year, over 80% of Reading Recovery children were successfully discontinued. (See Huck and Pinnell, 1985; Pinnell, et. al., 1986; Pinnell, 1985, DeFord, et. al., 1987; Lyons, et. al., 1987).

The Program For Children

The goal of the program is to help children develop an independent, self-generating system for reading, the kind that good readers have, so that they can keep on learning to read better as they gain experience. This program is consistent with the principle that children learn to read by reading (Smith, 1978). In Reading Recovery, the

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focus of reading is always on meaning. Each day, the child participates in a one-to-one intensive "lesson" guided by a teacher who is specially trained to help children develop strategies while they are engaged in meaningful reading and writing tasks.

During the 30-minute lesson, the child reads many "little" books and writes and reads a brief story or message. Instead of drill on isolated items, children are intensively engaged in meaningful experiences with written language. The lesson includes rereading familiar stories to build fluency and use strategies "on the run" like good readers do. Each day, the child is introduced to a new book, which will be read independently the next day. Every day, the teacher takes a "running record" of the child's reading of the new book experienced the previous day. The running record gives the teacher a chance to record and analyze the reading behavior in great detail and to make hypotheses about the kinds of in-the-head strategies the child is using. While strategies cannot be directly measured or taught, the Reading Recovery teacher can use this specific evidence from close observation to guide decisions and responses to the child.

Every lesson also includes writing. The child composes a message or brief story and works collaboratively with the teacher to write it. This writing experience "slows down" the reading process, giving the child a chance to examine details of written language within a message that has very strong meaning and language support. Stories children write are later used for reading.

Reading Recovery has had remarkable success in New Zealand, where, after an average of 12 to 14 weeks of individual daily intervention, young children learn to read.

Throughout the lesson, teacher/child interactions are conversational in nature. The teacher provides strong oral language support as a scaffold for the child's development of literacy. Within the general lesson framework, every child's program is different. For example, no child reads the same series of books. Teachers select from a list of over 300 books those which are particularly suitable for the individual child. Of course, children write from their own experience or in response to books, and their written messages are uniquely their own. The words they construct are those they really want to use rather than a predetermined list of sight words or sounds. The child's program is individually tailored in another subtle, yet powerful, way. Teachers adjust their moment-to-moment interactions with children to support the development of independent strategies for reading.

For example, Jamie read the text in figure 1 from *Nick's Glasses* (Cachemaille, 1983), a favorite book about a little boy who hunts for his glasses only to find he is wearing them.

Text:	Jamie's reading:
"Have you looked	✔ ✔ ✔
in your school bag?"	✔ ✔ ✔ ✔
said Dad.	✔ ✔

✔ = accurate reading

figure 1

Then she hesitated, looked closely at the print, and said, "I thought that said 'Daddy' until I read it." Jamie was attending to the visual details of words, but she was doing so within the context of meaningful reading. And, since she had new glasses, Jamie was reading a text especially important to her.

On another occasion, Jamie was reading *Sam's Mask* (Cachemaille, 1983).

Text:
Sam made a mask.

Jamie's reading

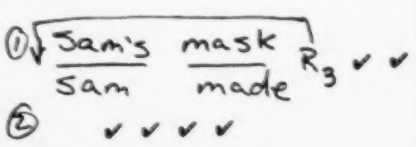

figure 2

Her three repetitions of the substitution, "Sam's mask" (see figure 2), indicated to the teacher that Jamie was aware of error. She was monitoring her own reading. Finally, she continued to the end of the sentence but hesitated, looking puzzled. Her teacher said, "What's wrong?"

"It doesn't make sense," Jamie said.

"You said 'Sam's.' Could that first word be 'Sam's'?"

"No, because it doesn't end in 's.' It's 'Sam.'!"

"Why don't you try that again and think what would make sense."

This time, Jamie read the sentence accurately and fluently, and her teacher said, "Great! You're really thinking about your reading." Jamie was monitoring and searching for meaning. She also showed that she could use visual information. The teacher supported the process but the child did the problem solving.

Professional Development For Teachers

How do teachers learn to work in these precise ways with children? The key component of the program is an intensive inservice course for teachers and a support system for implementing the program. Teachers meet in weekly seminars for an entire school year. Extensive use is made of a one-way glass for observation and analysis of lessons. A teacher demonstrates by teaching a child on one side of the glass. A sound system transmits what the teacher and child say to the other side of the glass where the rest of the teacher class observe. Guided by a trained teacher leader, the group of teachers talk while they observe the lesson. This interactive process helps them to become skillful at quickly analyzing the child's behavior and making the kinds of inferences that guide teacher decisions. (See Clay, 1982; Pinnell, 1987)

Teacher leaders receive a year's training that includes clinical work, a theoretical seminar, and various internship experiences. The Reading Recovery teacher leader is prepared to implement the program as a systemic intervention that includes creating a network of support. A university-based team provides teacher leader training and gives continuing assistance to teacher leaders at the local sites. We currently have 23 state sites

in Ohio and four sites outside the state.

For the university team, the teacher leaders, and Reading Recovery teachers, two components continue to exist even after the training year. First, they engage in professional development through continuing contact sessions and colleague visits. Second, everyone involved with the project – at all levels – continues to work daily with children. Becoming a leader or a university staff member does not mean losing the daily work with children that helps us to refine our knowledge and skills.

Implications For Classroom Teachers

For most children, Reading Recovery is not necessary, nor are these teaching techniques appropriate for classroom teaching. We can, however, learn from the success of Reading Recovery and draw some general principles for working with young children. We believe these to be sound suggestions that teachers can begin to implement without special training.

1. Increase observational power.

Reading Recovery teachers begin by using Clay's Diagnostic Survey. These individually applied assessments provide specific information about what children know about reading and writing. More important, though, teachers are expected to become sensitive observers of children's moment-by-moment responses. Reading Recovery teachers use a note-taking instrument and also record and analyze reading behavior using the running record to provide the information they need for decision making. In New Zealand, classroom teachers use the running record as a regular part of assessment. This flexible tool, as well as procedures such as miscue analysis, can help teachers develop observational power and enable them to assess and make inferences "on the run" while children are actually engaged in reading and writing.

2. Create massive opportunities for children to read and write.

In Reading Recovery, children spend almost every minute writing or reading. In classrooms, children need wide and varied opportunities to engage with whole texts. Teachers can provide these opportunities by making time for children to write and read instead of "fill in the blank" or drill activities. For young children, the use of big books and shared writing techniques (see *Reading in Junior Classes*, see also, McKenzie, "Journeys to Literacy") have greatly increased opportunities to behave as readers and writers. Children can produce their own writing, beginning with scribbles and invented forms, through journals, writing books, and combining writing with art activities. Extension activities through literature assist children in extending their understanding.

3. Provide high quality materials.

A good primary classroom has hundreds of books that are available to children. The collection will contain many works of children's literature, of course, but for children just beginning to read, there must also be many books they can handle themselves. Typical basal readers or controlled vocabulary books are not appropriate. The collections of "little" books, such as the Ready to Read series, are ideal for this purpose. They are easy books with some patterns. They are predictable but do not have stilted or artificial language.

The goal of the program is to help children develop an independent, self-generating system for reading, the kind that good readers have, so that they can keep on learning to read better as they gain experience.

4. Provide oral language support for literacy learning.

Children learn through using their own language. Throughout the Reading Recovery lesson, the teacher and child carry on a "conversation" that supports the child's own efforts to construct meaning from written text. In the classroom, a wide range of oral language support is available. The activities mentioned above provide opportunities for children to engage in talk, extending understanding as they do so. Before, during, and after reading texts, teachers discuss them with children. The writing process is supported by talk. Adult/child talk and child/child talk perform different roles, both valuable.

5. Invest in the professional development of teachers.

There is no substitute for the sensitive, informed teacher who can investigate, hypothesize, and make quality decisions about how to respond to each child, how to select and use materials, and how to design effective class activities. Teachers need continued professional development to support them in their work. This is best accomplished not through "one sheet" consultants but through long-term, locally-based efforts. One powerful model is to involve small groups of teachers in their own research projects. Another option is for teachers to participate in local support groups. A third possibility is to attend professional conferences. Become active. Your growth as a professional will aid children in the regular classroom as well as Reading Recovery children.

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